

# **St. Louis County Health Care Access Services Biennial Plan**

**Effective January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2014**

**Local Agency or Tribe: St Louis County**

**Person Responsible for Development of the Health Care Access Services Biennial Plan: Janet Eichholz**

**Telephone Number: 218-471-7525**

**Name of Person Responsible for Coordination of Health Care Access Transportation Services: Financial Workers**

**Telephone Number: 1-800-450-9777 (Toll-Free Switchboard)**

**General Purpose Statement:** To ensure that applicants/recipients of Medical Assistance (MA) and MinnesotaCare pregnant women and children under 21 years of age are provided with or reimbursed for the appropriate level of needed transportation and other travel related expenses to enable them to access necessary medical treatment. Access transportation services are available to transport the client to and from medically necessary services received from participating providers of services covered under the state MA plan.

*Transportation to non-participating providers shall also be paid under this plan if:*

- 1) The medically necessary service is covered under the MA state plan; and
- 2) The non-participating provider could be a participating provider if application was made; and
- 3) It results in proper and efficient administration of Minnesota Health Care Programs due to cost effectiveness.

**Cost Effectiveness:** Per Federal Regulations, transportation for each trip made by a recipient must be by the most cost effective means available that suits the medical needs of the recipient.

- Local agencies or Tribes shall direct recipients to utilize all available sources of free transportation services (such as relatives, friends, other public options if available) if it meets the needs of the recipient.
- The next most cost effective means of transportation under this plan is transport by the recipient's private vehicle.
- Reimbursement will not be made to a recipient or other person if the mode of transportation used or related travel expenses are furnished at no cost to the recipient, such as transportation provided by health care plans.
- Reimbursement will not be made for trips/mileage traveled without a recipient in the vehicle (no load miles).
- The local agency must document/describe the method/process of establishing the "least costly" method of transportation.
- The local agency must document/describe the method/process of establishing the transport was to the "closest provider" capable of providing the level of care needed.

## Part I. Transportation and Related Travel Costs

Recipients/applicants must use the most cost effective method of transportation available to them.

Whenever appropriate, the recipient's own vehicle must be used.

**A. Services available** for recipients receiving medical care from a MA certified provider:

1. Mileage reimbursement:

- 20 cents per mile for non-emergency transportation - vehicle provided by individual (family member, self, neighbor, etc.) with vested interest
- IRS business mileage deduction rate effective for the date-of-service (DOS) non-emergency transportation using: a vehicle provided by volunteer (individual or organization), with no vested interest and licensed foster parents.

2. Parking fees reimbursed at actual cost. Receipts required when available to recipient.

3. County/Tribe reimburses volunteer drivers at the IRS business deduction rate in place on the DOS.

4. Taxicab, bus and other commercial carrier fares are reimbursed at the established rate.

5. Meals: The maximum reimbursement for meals is:

Breakfast - \$5.50; Lunch - \$6.50; Dinner - \$8.00

6. Lodging: Authorization prior to incurring this cost is required. Limited to \$50.00 per night unless a higher rate is authorized by the local agency.

7. When another individual is necessary to accompany the recipient or to be present at the site of a health service, the accompanying individual will be reimbursed for the cost of meals, transportation, and lodging at the same standard as the recipient. Reimbursement may be made for more than one person if required by the physician's treatment plan.

8. Transportation and other related travel expenses of family members of recipients in covered treatment programs, such as mental health, if the family member's involvement is part of the recipient's written treatment plan.

9. If the client had travel expenses and is later found MHCP eligible (could include the three retroactive MA months), they may be eligible for reimbursement of allowed access transportation services at the reimbursement rates appropriate for the DOS as stated in this plan.

10. Transportation and other related travel expenses to out-of-state medically necessary services require prior authorization by the county/tribe for the fee-for-service (FFS) (straight MA) clients. *Transport and related ancillary access services are only provided or reimbursed when the out-of-state medical service has been authorized by the DHS contracted medical review agent.* Out-of-state services are medically necessary services obtained at a provider/facility location that is outside of Minnesota or its local trade area. Access transportation and related ancillary services are provided to the recipient and when necessary one responsible person or attendant.

11. Transportation and other related travel expenses to out-of-state medically necessary services require prior authorization/referral of the medical service(s) by the Managed Care Organization

(MCO) (health plan). *Transport and related ancillary access services are only provided or reimbursed when the out-of-state medical service has been authorized by the health plan.* Out of-state services are medically necessary services obtained at a provider/facility location that is outside of Minnesota or its local trade area. Access transportation and

related ancillary services are provided to the recipient and when necessary one responsible person or attendant.

12. Counties/tribes are responsible for all out-of-state transports and ancillary services of the FFS and MCO clients.

**B. Procedures to Obtain Services:**

1. Authorization to incur an ATS cost may be arranged in writing, by telephone or online depending upon the specific county process established. Documentation of authorization of ATS services must be maintained. Authorization to incur an ATS service cost from the county/tribe is required for:

- Lodging and meal expenses for an MA recipient and/or responsible person accompanying the MA recipient
- When the agency has determined access transportation and ancillary services have been misused. Example: An able-bodied individual living at a location with access to a public bus route uses a taxicab rather than the bus to access medical services available by bus transport.
- Transportation and related costs to receive DHS contracted reviewer or health plan authorized out-of-state medically necessary services.

2. Access services to the closest provider capable of providing the level of care needed **DO** require authorization by St Louis County to incur the ATS service cost(s).

**3. Emergency Needs Procedure:**

Authorization to incur the ATS cost(s) is not required. In emergency situations, recipients/applicants must secure transportation and related expenses, using the most cost effective and medically appropriate transportation. Recipients/applicants are required to notify this agency immediately after the emergency to secure consideration of reimbursement for the expenses.

**C. Billing and Payment Procedures:**

1. Providers of transportation and other travel-related services must submit bills for services to St Louis County Public Health and Human Services for payment. The bill should include date of service, origin and destination of the transportation mileage from point A to point B, and the cost of service. Origin/destination must be to a covered or coverable service in order for this bill to be paid under this plan.

2. Recipients and other persons eligible for reimbursement for costs of transportation and other related services shall submit to County Human Services/Tribal Agency actual receipts, when available, or signed, dated, and itemized statements of mileage and/or other allowed expenses.

3. All bills will be paid by St Louis County Human Services within 30 days of receipt. Financial workers may choose to provide a recipient with a voucher for transportation or other travel-related service.

**D. Service Restrictions:**

1. Payment shall be made for the most cost-effective available means of transportation which is suitable to the recipient's medical needs. As mentioned in Section I.B., authorization to incur costs of transportation and other related travel expenses may be required *except when* there is an emergency or in cases of retroactive eligibility.

2. When the recipient's attending physician makes a referral or the recipient requests to be

transported to a medical provider that is not the closest provider capable of providing the level of care the client requires, access services require authorization by the local agency prior to the recipient incurring the costs of the ATS services.

3. County/Tribe ***will not reimburse*** the recipient for transportation provided at no cost to the recipient.

## **Part II. ADA & Meaningful Access to Services**

### **A. Services Available:**

St Louis County Human Services will provide interpreter services to Deaf, blind, hard of hearing and Deaf/blind persons, and individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who are seeking or receiving assistance from St Louis County Human Services.

St Louis County Human Services will provide other assistance or services such as training, videos, information pamphlets or other services to individuals seeking or receiving assistance from County Human Services/Tribal Agency

Medical Assistance (MA) or other service providers, regardless of size, shall provide interpreter services to Deaf, blind, hard of hearing and Deaf/blind persons, and individuals with LEP who are seeking or receiving assistance as soon as the Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf/blind person, individual with LEP makes the request or the when the need is determined. If subsequent appointments are necessary they also need to be arranged prior to appointment.

Providers must offer this service at no cost and in a timely manner to the recipient as pertaining to State and Federal laws. This service only applies when the interpretation is provided in conjunction with another covered service, and does not apply to scheduling or arranging medical services.

### **B. Procedures to Obtain Services:**

County Human Services/Tribal Agency staff are responsible for providing an interpreter if it is deemed necessary to serve a Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf/blind client or individual with LEP, or if the Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf/blind client or individual with LEP requests an interpreter.

To locate a sign language interpreter, go to <http://www.interpreterreferral.org>. For a

spoken language interpreter, staff may go to the spoken language interpreter roster maintained by the Department of Health at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/interpreters>.

For further information, staff should follow the county's LEP plan about how to contact either a sign language interpreter or a foreign spoken language interpreter. County Human Services/Tribal Agency will make the request as early as possible for the referral agency to locate a qualified interpreter.

### **C. Billing and Payment Procedures:**

St Louis County Human Services will negotiate fees with the referral agency or interpreter. County Human Services/Tribal Agency will pay the interpreter for the service and charge the expense to the MA administrative account for reimbursement purposes.

All bills will be paid by County Human Services/Tribal Agency within 30 days of receipt.

### **D. Service Restrictions: None**

## **Part III. Access to Appeal Hearing Services**

### **A. Services Available:**

1. Reimbursement for reasonable and necessary expenses of applicants/recipients attendance at an appeal hearing, such as meals, lodging, parking, transportation, and child care costs.
2. Assistance from County Human Services/Tribal Agency' staff in locating transportation.

### **B. Procedures to Obtain Services:**

Applicants/recipients shall contact their worker at St Louis County Human Services if assistance in locating transportation or reimbursement for transportation and/or child care expenses will be needed to ensure the applicants/recipient's attendance at an appeal hearing.

### **C. Billing and Payment Procedures:**

Transportation expenses will be reimbursed according to the same criteria established in Part I.

Providers of transportation services must submit dated, itemized bills for service to County Human Services/Tribal Agency for payment. Applicants/recipients and other persons eligible for cost of transportation services shall submit to the County Human Services/Tribal

Agency actual receipts, when available, or signed, dated, and itemized statements of mileage. All bills will be paid by County Human Services/Tribal Agency within 30 days of receipt.

County/tribal staff may choose to provide a recipient with a voucher for transportation. Child care costs are reimbursable to the applicant/recipient for the time duration of the hearing, including travel to and from the child care provider. Child care will be reimbursed at the current "Child Care Program" hourly rate. County Human Services/Tribal Agency will reimburse applicants/recipients directly for their transportation and/or child care costs and then charge the expense to the MA Program administrative account for reimbursement.

### **D. Service Restrictions:**

St Louis County Human Services will not pay for child care if services are provided at no charge to the applicant/recipient.

## **Part IV. County Vouchers**

What is the county's/tribe's plan for clients who cannot afford to pay up-front for a bus pass or taxi? Duluth: Non-contractual vouchers are in place with several taxi companies; verification of client eligibility is sent to the company prior to the provision of service. Taxi companies bill the county directly. Bus tokens and passes are also available.

Range: Bus passes are provided. There is limited taxi services that follow the same procedure as above

Do you provide bus passes or taxi vouchers to clients? Bus Passes only.

## **Part V. Administration of Common Carrier**

Do you contract for common carrier services? No

## **Part VI. Notification to MA Recipients of Health Care Access Services**

A. The local agency or tribe shall inform a recipient of the Health Care Access transportation plan.

Applicants must be informed of available services at time of application, recertification and if the county adjusts their access transportation service plan.

B. Applicants/Recipients may be given a copy of the sample "Notice of Access Service Availability to Eligible Minnesota Health Care Program Recipients" found in Attachment

C. Please supply a copy of all handouts given to applicants/recipients informing them of access transportation and related ancillary service availability along with the completed pre-print.

## **Part VII. Other County/Tribe Specific Policies/Procedures/Conditions**

What are the identified gaps, issues, and/or barriers for transportation services in your area? St. Louis County is the largest county in size in Minnesota. Duluth is the largest urban area with several smaller cities on the Range. Much of the county is rural and in some areas very rural. Transportation in the rural and very rural areas is quite limited. Other than the urban areas there are little to no common carrier services. Volunteer Drivers are a limited resource and are not willing to transport for without no-load miles.

What coordination efforts is the county/tribe involved in to provide transportation services to its members such as Regional Transportation Planning initiatives? None

In the space below, please communicate any policies and procedures not covered in the document that reflect local agency or tribe administration of Access Services.

St. Louis County is currently covering no-load miles for Volunteer Drivers to maintain its pool of drivers as a resource.

## **Part VIII. Outside Provider Contracting**

Counties/tribes entering into a contract with an outside organization/provider for providing transportation service(s) or coordination activities for ATS provided to/for the MHCP recipient

**MUST** submit to DHS:

1. A copy of the ALL contract(s) with outside entities related to ATS
2. A statement of the per trip rate(s) or administration fee paid to the provider/coordinator
3. Documentation to show how the rates for transport or administrative fees were established

Counties/tribes utilizing an outside provider/coordinator to provide access transportation or administration should not enter into such contracts and provide reimbursement until they have submitted their contract(s) to DHS for review.

Counties/tribes should send contracts to:  
Bob Ries  
Health Service and Medical Management  
Minnesota Department of Human Services  
540 Cedar St  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0984  
Email: Bob.Ries@state.mn.us.  
Fax: (651) 431-7420.

**Part IX Upon 60 Day Notice, DHS May Terminate This Plan.**